

An erythristic Yellow-billed Parrot

Amazona collaria

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Adult parrots of the Genus *Amazona* generally have green body, wings and mantle, but many species have markings of other primary colours, usually confined to tracts of the wing, tail or head. Two species of mainly green *Amazona* parrot occur in Jamaica: the Black-billed Parrot *Amazona agilis* has two red wing feathers, and the Yellow-billed Parrot *Amazona collaria* is variably rose-coloured on the neck and chin, with yellow flashes to the wings and tail. Other nearby Caribbean *Amazona* parrots are similarly green, with those from Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico having small amounts of red on the head or wings. Colour morphs of various types are not uncommon in parrots but none is recorded from Jamaica (Gosse 1847, Forshaw & Cooper 1978, Downer & Sutton 1992).

On 25 November 1997 we observed a largely red *Amazona* parrot amongst a flock of c. 30 Yellow-billed Parrots at Millbank, in the Rio Grande valley of eastern Jamaica. The bird was strikingly red—similar in intensity to that of the Scarlet Macaw *Ara macao*. The parrot, observed at distances of 35 to 200 m, was identical in general shape, size and behaviour to nearby *A. collaria* with which it associated. The head, neck, breast and mantle were vivid scarlet as were the lesser wing coverts. The median wing coverts were deep orange-yellow and the flight feathers were blue-green as in normal *A. collaria*. The lower back and tail were normal green-blue colouration and the bill was yellowish. The bird was photographed.

Local citrus farmers informed us that they had from time to time seen red parrots flying around in the area but that they were not common. HD spends many days annually in the field tracking Yellow-billed Parrots as part of a scientific study of this species but had never encountered an erythristic bird until this observation. The *A. collaria* population of eastern Jamaica thus appears to have a rare erythristic variant, of which this is the first description.

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